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FROM : Ambassador TRIPOLI
TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.
REF :

February 27, 1959.
DATE

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SUBJECT: The SUNDAY GHIBLI and American Aid

Along among Tripoli's seven newspapers, the English-language SUNDAY GHIBLI has sought within the past few weeks to put before its readers a defense of the American aid program in Libya. In two editorials (Enclosures 1 and 2), it has explained why an accounting of expenditures is required and has taken to task the "wild men" carrying on the anti-American campaign. To achieve a sense of balance and to attempt to stave off criticism that it is a mouthpiece of the West, the GHIBLI has simultaneously published comment from the other side. (See Enclosure 3, "Opinion Roundup"). The "wild men", however, have not been silenced and two scathing editorials against the GHIBLI have recently been published, one in Salim a-Shiita's AL-TAHLELA of February 17 and the other in AL-RAID of February 21. (Enclosures 4 and 5) More can be expected as a result of the GHIBLI's comments of February 22.

The GHIBLI has a circulation of about 2700, primarily among the English and American communities and certainly cannot be said to have any editorial influence within any Libyan sphere. Its editor and publisher, Cedric Hugo Johnson, says that he makes no profit from the paper, but derives his net income from related activities, such as job printing. Because of the nature of its circulation, the attacks on the GHIBLI will not cause it to lose readers, but if the editorial clamor from the opposition press continues, the spinelessness of the provincial Government may result in some form of penalty against Mr. Johnson and the GHIBLI, even to the point of finding some excuse to close down the paper.

Enclosures:

1. Article from The SUNDAY GHIBLI, 2/15/59.
2. Article from The SUNDAY GHIBLI, 2/22/59.
3. Article from The SUNDAY GHIBLI, 2/22/59.
4. Translation of Article from AL-TAHLELA, 2/17/59.

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5. Translation from Article
from AL-RAID, 2/21/59.

For the Ambassador:

J. Paul Barringer
J. Paul Barringer
Counselor of Embassy

cc: AmEmbassy Benghazi

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From the SUNDAY GHIELLI, February 15, 1959

AID AND THE TAX-PAYER

We make no apology for once more broaching in this column the subject of American aid to Libya and the suggested review of the terms of the 1954 Libyan-American Base Rights Agreement.

For some weeks now it has been a leading topic, not only in this newspaper, but (not surprisingly) in the Arab press, too.

Now, with last week's brief initial meeting at Benghazi, the ice has been broken for the coming negotiations, and all interested in Libyan affairs must be anxious to see the outcome.

Nevertheless, those of us who have been discussing the matter since it arose in November have forgotten one aspect of it which was brought to mind last week by American officials. That is, that any change in the form or proportions of American aid to Libya - or to any other country - is ultimately subject to the scrutiny of US Congressmen and to the scrutiny of the electors whom they represent.

In other words - Congressmen, being the seasoned politicians that they are, and voters, being the prudent tax-payers that they are, inevitably wish to know "where is the money going? What is it being spent on?"

And, no doubt, they like to feel that money sent to under-developed countries - Libya's share was more than \$25-million this fiscal year - is not only being put to good use, but is also appreciated by the recipients.

Americans, generally, are an easy-going and generous people, who seem to accept the role that contemporary history has given them: the role of protagonists in the drama of world power-politics and global benefactors. But - they require an account.....

So far these Americans - businessmen, executives, technicians, workers - seem to have been content that a large part of their joint earnings should be used to help fellow-humans in less fortunate circumstances. But it must also be assumed that, through their press and their political representatives, they keep a sharp eye on such proceedings as the coming Base Rights and aid talks.

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From the SUNDAY GHIBLI, February 22, 1959

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

One thing emerges clearly from the interviews with Libyans on the subject of US aid printed on page eight this week: the more hysterical anti-American feeling would seem to be confined to those who specialize in it professionally.

Of course, four statements, taken at random, cannot pretend to be a statistically representative "cross section" of opinion, and no doubt there are infinite gradations of thought on the subject, with many personal views according to taste.

But, for what it is worth, here are four articulate Libyans, each with his own strongly-held opinion. None of them is uncritical of the US or of its assistance programme. Yet three of the four show the kind of moderate good sense which provides the stabilizing element in any society, while the fourth embodies a preference for a state of affairs which, though not everybody's "cup of tea", is a perfectly valid choice.

Indeed, during the past weeks, while the anti-US campaign of the "wild men" has been stepped up in intensity to the point of melodrama, opinion in general seems, paradoxically enough, to have been moving in the opposite direction.

Can it be that the Libyan people are not taken in by the deceptive generalizations of the strike-mongers? Can it be that while a few rave about a little girl accidentally killed by an American plane, the rest are thinking of the 4,000 other little girls (and little boys) who are being protected against polio with American drugs? Can they have been reading about the 160 schools built with American funds during the past 13 months?

Yes, the Libyan people and their responsible leaders seem well aware of the realities of the situation, as distinct from the cloak-and-dagger oversimplifications out of which those with an axe to grind find it easy to make political capital.

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From the SUNDAY GAZETTE, February 22, 1959

Opinion RoundupWHAT LIBYANS SAY OF AMERICAN AIDSays a leading Libyan personality:

Before passing on to the subject of US aid to Libya I should like to say something about the wilder kind of criticism that has been emanating from certain quarters.

To talk of "masters and slaves", "insulted dignity" and "exploitation" of Libya by the Americans is not merely silly - it is almost criminally irresponsible. I hope that none of the Americans working in my country believe for a moment that these extravagances represent in any way the feelings of the ordinary Libyan people or their leaders.

Why those who fulminate like this do so at all is open to conjecture. No doubt some enjoy criticizing for its own sake, some do it for their own aggrandisement and others do it simply because they are paid for it.

But such people need not interest us. These wild ones apart, Libyans everywhere are well aware of the benefits which their country reaps under the Base Rights Agreement and the foreign aid programme. They have only to compare their present situation with their situation of ten years ago. Those with eyes to see and brains to think with are quite certain of the concrete benefits they have derived from the friendly agreements between Libya and the USA. Neither do they feel that they are being "exploited" or "enslaved"! They know that America receives reciprocal benefits from the arrangement, and so they consider themselves as people upholding one side of a bargain.

Time is Ripe

Yet I believe that the time has come for a review, and possibly a reorganization, of the mechanics of the aid programme. Times have changed and, quite honestly, many of us feel that the mode of applying assistance has been shown to be uneconomical and, in some respects, inefficient. It would be better for America to discharge her part of the Libyan-US bargain by paying a fixed sum towards Libya's economic development and to let Libya, through an agency of her own, undertake the deployment of these finances, with the understanding that American technicians could be employed as and when they were needed.

I hope that at the Base Rights talks Libyan and American delegates will be able to reach some such agreement in an atmosphere of friendliness.

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Says a journalist:

Wheelus is the largest US air base outside of the USA, and Libya is at present the only feasible situation for it on the North African coast.

In return for this Libya receives \$4 million under the 1954 Base Rights Agreement and a varying sum annually under the aid program. But to distinguish between the two sums is really false. You need only ask yourself how much US aid Libya would get were it not for the strategic facilities here enjoyed by America.

Meanwhile, there is always the possibility that should Wheelus base ever be used in a war, a retaliatory attack with nuclear bombs would destroy Tripoli and a large part of Tripolitania. I would add that Libya is not the only country whose people are unhappy at having US bases in their midst.

These are America's advantages and Libya's risks. In exchange we receive a sum of money which we are not even allowed to spend in the way we think fit.

Big Salaries

The agencies through which the aid is channelled, besides not understanding Libya's needs, are highly uneconomical. They keep a permanent pool of highly-paid foreign technicians and fleets of cars. If Libya had the handling of the aid, she would operate on a much more economical basis, employing foreign technicians as and when they were needed. And to say that the technicians' salaries do not come out of the aid is, again, theoretical. The amount of aid varies from year to year and there is no doubt that salaries are taken into account.

Libyans believe it would be better for the Americans to come to the conference table and say frankly: "We need such-and-such strategic advantages. We are willing to pay such-and-such an amount! And not to dictate how it is to be spent. When you pay the rent you don't ask the landlord how he will spend it!

This would be better than talking about aid as if it were a gift; better than the dubious propositions of 'saving humanity' and 'defending the free world'.

In addition to the economic and strategic questions, there is America's failure to respect Libya's sovereignty. Libyans want to know why US servicemen should be outside the jurisdiction of the Libyan courts. The British and other foreigners do not ask for such special treatment. Why should the Americans?

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(Classification)Says a student:

I don't believe the wilder press criticisms of US aid here are what the average person thinks. Most of us know that America has a genuine concern for Libya and wants to have a permanent friendly relationship with us.

But there is a case for revision of the Agreement. It was hastily arranged during the early years of Libyan independence; since then there have been a lot of changes in Libya's requirements, and recently there has been a widespread feeling that the Agreement is no longer compatible with changed conditions.

Average View

The average individual has a feeling that his country is getting very little in return for the privileges the USA enjoys in having its largest overseas air base here, and unless substantial and tangible proof is given to him it will be hard to make him change his mind. This can be achieved only by giving him concrete, visible improvements he can see for himself.

I don't mean that nothing has been done. Libya has drawn benefits from the US: the living standard has been raised by inevitable US spending here. But the people want more than incidental benefits. They want programs for immediate progress.

There is also a question of national pride. Many Libyans sense a certain disregard of this on the part of the Americans here.

Finally, I think that any revision of the Base Rights Agreement must take into account the friendship between the two countries, Libya's needs, and American Congressional procedure. All these factors would have to be reconciled in terms of mutual confidence and understanding.

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Says a truck driver:

Like many Libyans, I would prefer it if the Americans left Libya and took their air base and their money with them. We did not achieve Independence to provide flying fields for foreigners to pursue their policies and bring danger to us.

We had enough foreigners here before Independence. Now we should be developing the country as an Arab state, advancing with the help of other Arab states and without all these foreign influences.

We do not really need foreign money. Libya would have been better off refusing to enter agreements with other powers. As it is, we have allowed a great many foreigners into our country, trying to tell us new ways of doing things.

We Libyans do not want our country to become a copy of America or England. We want it to be Libya! We have our own way of life, which we consider better than that of others, and we should be joining with our Arab brothers in maintaining the Arab way of life instead of the opposite, as we are now doing.

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From Tripoli

SUMMARY OF EDITORIAL FROM AL-TALELA, February 17, 1959

THE SUNDAY GHIBLI PLAYS WITH FIRE AND

CHEATS ITS READERS

Journalism in any country is a sublime profession, directed toward giving the public the truth. The SUNDAY GHIBLI does not follow this rule. The SUNDAY GHIBLI displays its deep hatred of the Libyan people for no reason except the support and assistance which the Libyan people showed during the tripartite aggression against Egypt in 1956.

Yes, the SUNDAY GHIBLI is a foreign newspaper employed in spreading propaganda supporting imperialism's policy.

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SUMMARY OF EDITORIAL FROM AL-RAID, February 21, 1959

THE LOGIC OF IMPERIALISM

The SUNDAY GHIBLI is an English newspaper published by an Englishman, not in England but in Tripoli. This man grows rich and transfers thousands of pounds every year to Britain. His newspaper continues to support imperialism. There is no explanation for this disrespect for Libya's hospitality except that the paper has no regard for Libya's Government and people. Otherwise it would not have published what it did about the American-Libyan negotiations.

The GHIBLI had thus shown its contempt for the interests of the people, its ability to twist facts, and has joined the campaign of trying to frighten the Libyan negotiators. It, however, underrates the Libyan authorities by choosing to believe them cowards.

What do we care for the American Congress and the American tax-payer? Did we ask them to build an air base in our country and expose us to unlimited dangers? Did we offer them all these concessions in our country? Did we ask them to expose the lives of our women, men, and children to peril? Did we ask them to expose our country to Russian bombs in case of war?

The American Government with the approval of the American Congress elected by the American taxpayer has imposed this Base on us together with the Base Agreement, taking advantage of our belief in the principles of the free world. It has exploited our belief in the necessity of joining in the joint defense of the free world against communism.

Let the SUNDAY GHIBLI, its readers, the American Congress and the American taxpayer understand that no matter how much America pays and will pay, all this will not equal one tenth of the dangers to which we are exposed through the presence of U.S. forces in Libya or one tenth of the disgrace involved in the relinquishment of our sovereignty.

This is our last word to the Libyan authorities. It is time that we should put an end to tolerance. It is time that we end the publication of the SUNDAY GHIBLI and prevent it from deceiving its readers further. It is time that we should make the SUNDAY GHIBLI understand that flattering the Americans will have contrary results. The time has come when the Americans should know that their supporters, such as the SUNDAY GHIBLI, do not help matters except by increasing misunderstandings and widening the scope of the dispute. Their efforts would force us to accept the other offer. We would then say to them: "If neither the American Congress nor the American taxpayer accepts our claim to our rights, then get out of our country."

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The American taxpayer, who accepts the fact that hundreds of millions of dollars are given to Israel, should accept the fact that Libya is due a few millions. But these people who had the impertinence to import oranges from Israel under false pretenses, do they understand? No, we do not believe that they do!

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